

Anusaya

Latent tendencies

The self, habits, awareness and liberation

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1 Latent tendencies

1.1 WHAT IS ANUSAYA?

1.1.1 All our actions—mental, verbal and bodily—are not always conscious ones. In fact, the unawakened person is more likely to act so habitually that he is unconscious of his actions.¹ In early Buddhist psychology, such actions are still said to be *deliberate*, that is, they are karmically potent.² Such actions bear karmic fruits because they are rooted in greed, hate or delusion. [1.4]

This level of mental activity is said to be on a *pre-conscious* level. They are just below the conscious, and as they are habitual, not much thought, if any, is given to them. They are deliberately done, but without any wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).³ On this level, such actions are called “formations” (*saṅkhāra*), karmically significant actions done through the mind, speech or the body. These in turn slavishly feed the latent tendencies.

Latent tendencies, as such, are the primordial roots of motivation are our “latent tendencies,” lurking deep in the shadows and corners of our minds, yet dictating and colouring our actions. According to Buddhaghosa, they are called “latent tendencies” on account of persistence, they exist forever, as it were, life after life, and are the conditions for the arising of new and renewed greed, etc. (Vism 22.60/684)

1.1.2 The Commentary to the Anusaya Sutta (S 45.175) says that a latent tendency (*anusaya*) is the defilement itself, but is a latent tendency in the sense that it has gained strength (*thama, gata ‘aṭṭhena*, SA 3:137). The Porāṇa Ṭīkā adds it “has gained strength” by being firmly attached to a being’s mental continuum (*satta, santāne thīra, bhāvūpagamana, bhāvena*, SAPṬ:VRI 2:122).

The Abhidhammattha, saṅgaha says: “The latent dispositions (*anusayā*) are defilements which ‘lie along with’ (*anusenti*) the mental process to which they belong, rising to the surface as obsessions whenever they meet with suitable conditions” (Abhs 7.9). The term “latent dispositions” highlights the fact that the defilements are liable to arise so long as they have not been eradicated by the supramundane paths. [9]

1.1.3 The sixth book of the Abhidhamma, the Yamaka (the Book of Pairs), treats the latent tendencies more comprehensively. It mentions the seven latent tendencies, which is also listed in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33.2.3.12/3:254). The Yamaka treats them in detail in its seventh chapter (Anusaya Yamaka). It first lists the seven latent tendencies (*sattānusaya*), and then explains their arising (*uppatti-t, thāna, vāra*), as follows:

The seven latent tendencies are

- (1) the latent tendency of sensual lust;
 - (2) the latent tendency of aversion;
 - (3) the latent tendency of conceit;
 - (4) the latent tendency of views;
 - (5) the latent tendency of doubt;
 - (6) the latent tendency of lust for existence;
 - (7) the latent tendency of ignorance.
- (1) Where does *the latent tendency of sensual lust* lie latent?
The latent tendency of sensual lust lies latent here in the two feelings [pleasant and neutral] of the sense-sphere.
 - (2) Where does *the latent tendency of aversion* lie latent?

¹ See **Unconscious Views** = SD 31.9.

² On how karma can be unconscious, see **The unconscious mind** = SD 17.8b.

³ On wise attention, see **Unconscious Views** = SD 31.9 (4.3) & **Nimitta & Anuvyañjana** = SD 19.14.

- The latent tendency of aversion lies latent in painful (bodily and mental) feeling.
- (3) Where does *the latent tendency of conceit* lie latent?
The latent tendency of conceit lies latent here in the two feelings of the sense-sphere, and in those of the form sphere and the formless sphere.
- (4) Where does *the latent tendency of views* lie latent?
The latent tendency of views lies latent in all states related to identity (*sakkāya*).⁴
- (5) Where does *the latent tendency of doubt* lie latent?
The latent tendency of doubt lies latent in all states related to identity (*sakkāya*).
- (6) Where does *the latent tendency of lust for existence* lie latent?
The latent tendency of lust for existence lies latent in the form sphere and the formless sphere.
- (7) Where does *the latent tendency of ignorance* lie latent?
The latent tendency of ignorance lies latent in all states related to identity (*sakkāya*).
(Yam 268; cf Nyanatiloka 1971: 104)

The Yamaka then explains how they are overcome, their penetration, etc, in detail.⁵ According to **the Kathāvatthu** (by Moggalīputta Tissa), several ancient Buddhist schools erroneously held that the latent tendencies were merely latent; hence, they are karmically neutral. This however contradicts the early Buddhist teachings.⁶

1.2 SETS OF ANUSAYA. Generally, the earlier doctrinal lists are, the shorter they are. If this is true, then one of the oldest terms relating to *anusaya* is probably the compound *adhīṭhānābhīnivesānusaya*,⁷ found in the **Kaccāna.gotta Sutta** (S 12.15)⁸ and the **Channa Sutta** (S 22.90).⁹ It is sometimes translated, following commentarial tradition (eg SA 2:33), as “the mental standpoints, adherences and latent tendencies.” However, I think a better translation would be “the latent tendencies of mental standpoint and of adherences,” or even “the latent tendency of adherence to mental standpoints.”

The Saṃyutta Commentary says that craving and views are called “(fixed) mental standpoint [mindset]” (*cetaso adhīṭhana*) because they are the foundation for the (unwholesome) mind, and “adherence and latent tendency” (*abhīnivesānusaya*) or, better, “the latent tendency of adherence (to views),” because they stay to the mind and lie latent there (SA 2:33).

Elsewhere, it is said that they are “(fixed) mental standpoints” (*adhīṭhāna*) because they are the foundations for the unwholesome mind, and “adherence and latent tendencies” because they adhere to the mind and lie latent there.¹⁰ In short, they are probably refer to the original two latent tendencies: craving and views, which for greater clarity and effect in teaching, are gradually expanded.

Then there is a list of three latent tendencies, found, for example, in the **Pahāna Sutta** (S 36.3), thus:

- (1) the latent tendency to lust (*rāgānusaya*);
- (2) the latent tendency to aversion (*paṭighānusaya*); and
- (3) the latent tendency to ignorance (*avijjānusaya*). (S 36.3/4:204-206) = SD 31.1

This list of the latent tendency (*anusaya*) or psychologically unconscious (but more powerful) version of the three unwholesome roots (*akusala,mūla*) of greed, hate and delusion, which operate on a pre-con-

⁴ See **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44), where *sakkāya* is said to refer to the 5 aggregates (M 44.2/1:299); but cf BDict: *sakkāya*, where it is rendered as “existing group,” which is somewhat befuddling.

⁵ See Nyanatiloka 1971: 88-113 (ch VI).

⁶ Kvu 9.4/407, 11.1/444, 14.5/499. See Nyanatiloka 1971: 73, 75, 78.

⁷ S 2:17, 3:10, 135, 161; A 5:3.

⁸ S 12.15/2:17 = SD 6.13.

⁹ S 22.90/3:135 = SD 56.5.

¹⁰ SA 2:259; NmA 2:310.

scious level.¹¹ When any of the precepts is breached, it is always motivated by one or more of these three roots.

The **Mahā MāluṅkyaputtaSutta** (M 64) gives a list of five latent tendencies, which are there called “the five lower fetters” (*orambhāgiya saṃyojana*). These five latent tendencies are:

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) The latent tendency of self-identity | (<i>sakkāya, diṭṭhānusaya</i>), |
| (2) The latent tendency of doubt | (<i>vicikicchānusaya</i>), |
| (3) The latent tendency of attachment to rituals and vows | (<i>sīla-, bata, parāmāsānusaya</i>), |
| (4) The latent tendency of sense-desire | (<i>kāma, rāgānusaya</i>), |
| (5) The latent tendency of ill will | (<i>vyāpādānusaya</i>). |
- (M 64.3/1:432 f) = SD 21.10 [1.3]

These latent tendencies are called “lower fetters” because they bind us to the sense-world. These five lower fetters form the first half of the ten fetters (*dasa saṃyojanā*), which are:¹²

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| (1) self-identity view | (<i>sakkāya, diṭṭhī</i>), ¹³ | |
| (2) persistent doubt | (<i>vicikicchā</i>), | |
| (3) attachment to rituals and vows | (<i>sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa</i>), ¹⁴ | |
| (4) sensual lust | (<i>kāma, rāga</i>), | |
| (5) repulsion | (<i>paṭigha</i>), | |
| (6) greed for form existence | (<i>rūpa, rāga</i>), | |
| (7) greed for formless existence | (<i>arūpa, rāga</i>), | |
| (8) conceit | (<i>māna</i>), | |
| (9) restlessness | (<i>uddhacca</i>), | |
| (10) ignorance | (<i>avijjā</i>). | (S 5:61; A 5:13; Vbh 377) |

The higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya saṃyojana*) are 6-10, and they hold us back in the form world or formless world, so that we are still stuck in samsara. Four of the higher fetters are found in the set of seven fetters below. Fetters 6-7 become *the latent tendency of lust for existence*. Only restlessness seems to be left out, but this is usually included in *the latent tendency of doubt*. The arhat has overcome all these ten fetters.

A set of seven latent tendencies is found in the **Saṅgīti Sutta**,¹⁵ the **Cha, chakka Sutta**,¹⁶ the **Anusaya Sutta**,¹⁷ the **Paṭisambhidā, magga**,¹⁸ the **Vibhaṅga**,¹⁹ and the **Yamaka** [1.1.3].²⁰ The **Paṭisambhidā, magga** and the **Vibhaṅga** (in the Abhidhamma tradition) define the latent tendencies in practically the same way as the suttas:²¹

And what are the latent tendencies of beings?

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----|
| (1) the latent tendency of sensual lust | (<i>kāma, rāgānusaya</i>); | [2] |
| (2) the latent tendency of aversion | (<i>paṭighānusaya</i>); | [3] |
| (3) the latent tendency of conceit | (<i>mānānusaya</i>); | [4] |

¹¹ See (**Akusala, mūla**) **Añña, tittiyā S** (A 3.68/1:199-201) = SD 16.4.

¹² On the 10 fetters & sainthood, see **Kiṭṭa, giri S** (M 70) = SD 11.1 (5.1).

¹³ See **Antā S** (S 22.103) = SD 14.1.

¹⁴ See **Kukkura, vatika S** (M 57/1:387-392) = SD 23.11.

¹⁵ D 33.2.3(12)/3:254, 282.

¹⁶ M 148.28/3:285 = SD 26.6.

¹⁷ A 7.11+12/4:9.

¹⁸ Pm §587/123.

¹⁹ Vbh §816/341, §949/383.

²⁰ Yam 268; cf Nyanatiloka 1971: 104.

²¹ See **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18.8/1:110) = SD 6.14 Intro (5).

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|---|-------------------------------|-----|
| (4) the latent tendency of views | (<i>diṭṭhānusaya</i>); | [5] |
| (5) the latent tendency of doubt | (<i>vicikicchā'nusaya</i>); | [6] |
| (6) the latent tendency of lust for existence | (<i>bhava,rāgānusaya</i>); | [7] |
| (7) the latent tendency of ignorance | (<i>avijjā'nusaya</i>). | [8] |

That which in the world is pleasant and likable, there the tendency to sensual lust of beings lies latent.

That which in the world is unpleasant and unlikable, there the tendency to aversion of beings lies latent.

Thus in these two states, ignorance continuously occurs, and so too conceit, wrong view and doubt.

This is the latent tendency of beings.²² (Pm §587/123; Vbh §816/341)²³

1.3 THE LATENCY OF ANUSAYA. William S Waldron, in his book, *The Buddhist Unconscious*, asks an interesting and pertinent question regarding the latent tendencies:

The persistence of the latent tendencies until far along the path of liberation, however, immediately raises a number of questions that will challenge later Buddhist analyses of mind. If they are so persistent that one continuously harbors such tendencies until reaching liberation—which is implicit in the foregoing and explicit to differing in succeeding schools—then why would they not affect all of one's activities, making them *all* of them afflictive, karmic activities (and, in the process, making liberation impossible)? But if they do not, then how do they exist when they are not actively affecting one's activities? Although such questions were not raised, and hence went unanswered, until Abhidharma analyses forced the issue, the outlines of the problem are evident enough in the early texts. (Waldron 2003:39)

Waldron goes on to say that although many of the early texts are ambiguous on these points, at least one such text is suggestive, that is, **the Mahā Mālunkya,putta Sutta** (M 64), where the Buddha states that the five lower mental fetters (*saṃyojana*)²⁴ are latently present even in an infant:

(1) For, Mālunkya,putta, even a young tender infant, lying on its back, does not have the notion of 'self-identity' (*sakkāya*);²⁵ for, how could the self-identity view arise for him? Yet, there lies the latent tendency of self-identity view in him.

(2) For, Mālunkya,putta, even a young tender infant, lying on its back, does not have the notion of 'dharma' ['thing'] (*dhamma*); for, how could doubt regarding dharmas [things] arise for him? Yet, there lies the latent tendency of doubt in him.

(3) For, Mālunkya,putta, even a young tender infant, lying on its back, does not have the notion of 'virtue' (*sīla*); for, how could attachment to rituals and vows with regards to moral virtue arise for him? Yet, there lies the latent tendency of attachment to rituals and vows in him.

(4) For, Mālunkya,putta, even a young tender infant, lying on its back, does not have the notion of 'sense-desire' (*kāma*); for, how could sense-desire in sense-pleasure arise for him? Yet, there lies the latent tendency of sense-desire in him.

²² *Katamo ca sattānaṃ anusayo? Sattānusayā: kāma,rāgānusayo, paṭighānusayo, mānānusayo, diṭṭhānusayo, vicikicchā'nusayo, bhava,rāgānusayo, avijjā'nusayo. Yaṃ loke piya,rūpaṃ sāta,rūpaṃ, ettha sattānaṃ kāma,rāgānusayo [rāgānusayo, Vbh] anuseti. Yaṃ loke appiya,rūpaṃ asāta,rūpaṃ ettha sattānaṃ paṭighānusayo anuseti. Iti imesu dvīsu dhammesu avijjā'nupatitā, tad-ekaṭṭho māno ca diṭṭhi ca vicikicchā ca daṭṭhabbā. Ayaṃ sattānaṃ anusayo.*

²³ See also D 33.2.3(12)/3:254; M 18.8/1:109 f; S 45.175/5:60; A 7.11-12/4:9.

²⁴ On the 10 fetters, see (1.2).

²⁵ Cf **Samāṇa,maṇḍika S** (M 78.8/2:24), "body" (*kāya*) is used, and where Comy says that the baby does not know the difference between its own body and those of others (MA 3:267).

(5) For, Mālunkya,putta, even a young tender infant, lying on its back, does not have the notion of ‘being’ (*satta*); for, how could ill will towards beings arise for him? Yet, there lies the latent tendency of ill will in him. (M 64.3/1:432 f) = SD 21.10

From this passage, we can safely surmise that “fetter” (*samyojana*) and “latent tendency” (*anusaya*) are synonymous. While the fetters are used in reference to the stages of sainthood, the latent tendencies stress on the latency and persistence of these defilements.

The Sutta’s commentary says that those outside the Teaching believed that a person is affected by the latent tendencies only when they are operating, but not otherwise (MA 3:144 f). Apparently, they believed that the infant was free from defilements.

1.4 LATENT TENDENCIES ARE UNCONSCIOUS PROCESSES.

1.4.1 Latent tendencies can function in themselves. We began this essay by saying that we are *not* always conscious [1.1]. When our conscious minds intend (*ceteti*) and plan (*pakappeti*), this feeds our karmic or existential consciousness,²⁶ which means we will be reborn in due course. However, even when we *neither* intend *nor* plan, we are still reborn—this is on account of the momentum of our latent tendencies. **The Cetanā Sutta 1** (S 12.38) clearly states this:

2 THE CONSCIOUS ARISING OF SUFFERING. (1) ²⁷Bhikshus, what one intends,²⁸ and what one plans,²⁹ and one has latent tendency [what lies latent]³⁰—this is a mental basis³¹ for the support [establishing] for consciousness.³²

When there is a mental basis [condition], consciousness is established.³³

²⁶ “Existential consciousness” is a modern generic term for what is commonly known in the texts as “being-to-be-born” or gandharva (*gandhabba*) (M 1:266, 2:157; *tatrūpagata,satto*, “the being that has arrived there,” MA 2:310), and in Comys as “rebirth consciousness” (*paṭisandhi,citta*, DA 2:430; MA 4:174; SA 1:184, 2:31), and “life-continuum” (*bhavaṅga*, DA 1:194, 2:594; MA 1:262, 2:77, 229, 352, 366; SA 1:184, 224, 2:358, 3:4, 54, 97, 3:191). In contrast, there is “cognitive consciousness,” which is operative during life itself, ie, in sense-experiencing. See Nagara S (S 12.65) = SD 14.2 Intro (2) & *Viññāṇa* = SD 17.8a(6).

²⁷ *Yaṅ ca kho bhikkhave ceteti, yaṅ ca pakappeti, yaṅ ca anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṅ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati paṭiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa hoti.* According to Bodhi, here “*saṅkhārā* are referred to elliptically by the expressions *yaṅ ceteti*, ‘what one wills,’ and *yaṅ pakappeti*, ‘what one plans’ (*pakappeti* is a rare term, apparently synonymous with *ceteti*). The expression *yaṅ anuseti*, ‘what lies latent within,’ points to the *anusaya*, the latent tendencies, which other texts tell us include the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjānusaya*) and the latent tendency of lust or craving (*rāgānusaya*) [M 1:190 f, 1:303 etc].” (1998:21, digital ed). See Intro (2.1) above.

²⁸ “One intends” (*ceteti*) here includes all wholesome and unwholesome volition of the three planes. See Intro (2.1) above.

²⁹ “One plans” (*pakappeti*), the mental fabrications of craving and views (*taṅhā,ditṭhi,kappā*) in the 8 cittas (mind-moments) accompanied by greed. [SAPT: The fabrications of views occur only in the 4 cittas associated with views.] See Intro (2.1) above.

³⁰ “What lies latent” (*anuseti*), ie, one habitually does something whether out of unwholesome motivation or wholesome motivation, or even without intention. See SD 7.6a Intro (2.1).

³¹ *Yaṅ ca kho bhikkhave ceteti, yaṅ ca pakappeti, yaṅ ca anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṅ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati paṭiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa hoti.* “This is a mental basis” (*ārammaṇaṅ etaṅ hoti*). These various states such as volition become a condition; for here the word *ārammaṇa* is intended as condition (*paccaya*) [that is, here *ārammaṇa* does *not* signify an object of consciousness, the usual meaning in the Abhidhamma].

³² “For the support for consciousness” (*viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā*), that is, for the purpose of maintaining the karmic consciousness. When there is this condition, “there is a support for consciousness” (*paṭiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti*), that is, for the establishing of that karmic consciousness. [SAPT: It has a capacity to yield fruit in one’s mental continuum.]

³³ *Ārammaṇe sati paṭiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa hoti*, lit “when there is a mental basis, there is the establishing of consciousness.” Here, *ārammaṇa* has an early non-technical sense, meaning simply “condition,” and as Bodhi takes pain to state, “does *not* signify an object of consciousness, the usual meaning in Abhidhamma” (S:B 758 n112). For an expl of this “condition,” see **Madhu,piṇḍika** S (M 18.16/1:111 f) = SD 6.14.

³⁴When that consciousness is established and grows therein,³⁵ there is further [continued] arising of rebirth.³⁶

When there is the further arising of rebirth, there further arise birth,³⁷ decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain [displeasure], and despair.

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

3 THE UNCONSCIOUS ARISING OF SUFFERING. (2) ³⁸If, bhikkhus, one does not intend, and one does not plan, but if one still has latent tendencies (*anuseti*)³⁹—this is a mental basis (*ārammaṇa*) that supports consciousness.

When there is a mental basis, there is a support for consciousness.

When consciousness has a support and grows, there is further [continued] arising of rebirth.

When there is the further arising of rebirth, there further arise birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair.

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.⁴⁰

(S 12.38/2:65) = SD 7.6a

Bhikkhu Bodhi interprets “what one intends” (*ceteti*) and “what one plans” (*pakappeti*) here as representing volitional formations (*sankhāra*), the second factor of dependent arising formula.⁴¹ “One has latent tendency” or “what lies latent” (*anuseti*) implies the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), primarily those of ignorance and craving, that is, the first and eighth factors in the formula. When we die with the latent tendencies of ignorance and of craving still intact, our intentions and plans—the concrete manifestations of craving in the form of volitional activities (*sankhāra*)—become the basis for consciousness and continue on, become established on a fresh “name-and-form” (*nāma,rūpa*), and initiate the production of a new existence. This is the event of birth, followed by death-and-death, and other types of suffering between birth and death.⁴²

1.4.2 We are our latent tendencies. If the saying, “We are what we think” is a truism, its truth is defined by our latent tendencies. Thought may come and thoughts may go, but latent tendencies remain forever, as least as long as we are unawakened. We are born with nothing in to this world, expert for our latent tendencies; we take nothing with us when we die, except of our latent tendencies. Our latent tendencies relentlessly trail us, every moment of our unawakened lives, whether we are conscious of it or not. For, we are our latent tendencies.

³⁴ *Tasmim̐ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe āyatim̐ punabbhavābhiniḃbati hoti.*

³⁵ “When that consciousness has a support and grows” (*tasmim̐ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe...virūḷhe*). When, having driven karma on (*kammaṇi javāpetvā*), it has grown and produced roots, through its ability to cause rebirth; hence, “there is further arising of rebirth,” ie, production consisting in renewed existence. (SA 2:71)

³⁶ *Punabbhavābhiniḃbatti*. Here *punabbhava* (lit “renewed existence”) is the Sutta term for “rebirth,” which in later literature is called *paṭisandhi* (see BDict). See **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43.17/1:294). It is possible to render this phrase, taking *punabbhavābhiniḃbatti* as a dvandva, as “renewed existence and arising in the future” (BDict). Here I have taken it in a general sense of the continuance of existence within the present life and indefinitely into future ones. Sometimes *abhiniḃbatti* by itself means “rebirth” (A 6.61/3:399-402, 10.65/5:120 f).

³⁷ “Birth” (*jāti*), omitted in PTS ed.

³⁸ *No ce bhikkhave ceteti no ce pakappeti atha ce anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā.*

³⁹ “But if one still has latent tendency” (*atha ce anuseti*); here “latent tendency” is countless collective n: the latent tendencies are included because they have not been abandoned here in the resultants of the three planes, in the limited functional states (the five-door advertent and mind-door advertent citta), and in form. As long as the latent tendencies exist, they become a condition for the karmic consciousness; for there is no way to prevent its arising. See Intro (2) for more details.

⁴⁰ Comy says that this section refers to the moment when there is occurrence of volition of the 3 planes, and no occurrence of mental fabrications of craving and views (SA 2:71). See Intro (3) above for detailed nn.

⁴¹ See **Dependent arising** = SD 5.16. On formations, see **Saṅkhāra** = SD 17.6.

⁴² See Bodhi, *In the Buddha’s Words*, Boston, 2005: 451 n49.

The Annatara Bhikkhu Sutta 1 (S 22.35) gives a short but clear teaching on this topic. In response to a request by “a certain monk” asking the Buddha for a short teaching for his solitary retreat, the Buddha obliges with this teaching:

Bhikshu, one is reckoned by whatever lies latent in one.
One is not reckoned by what does not lie latent in one.

*Yam kho, bhikkhu, anuseti, tena saṅkham gacchati;
yam nānuseti, na tena saṅkham gacchatī ti.*

(S 22.35/3:35) = SD 31.4

The monk then exclaims that he fully understands it, and explains it in detail in terms of each of the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness). The Buddha applauds him. He goes into retreat and in due course becomes an arhat. (S 22.35/3:35 f = SD 31.4)

The Sutta commentary explains that if we have a latent tendency towards form by way of sensual lust, etc, then we are described in terms of that latent tendency as being lustful, hated or deluded. But when that latent tendency is absent, one is not reckoned so. (SA 3:265). Bodhi adds an interesting note in this connection:

Additionally, we might suppose that, one is reckoned not only by way of the defilements, but even more prominently by way of the aggregate with which one principally identifies. One who inclines to form is reckoned as a “physical” person, who inclines to feeling a “hedonist,” one who inclines to perception an “aesthete” (or fact-gatherer?), one who inclines to volition a “man of action,” one who inclines to consciousness a thinker, etc. (S:B 1053 n47)

1.5 LEVELS OF DEFILEMENTS. Although all defilements are, in a sense, *anusayā*, the seven mentioned here are the most prominent (Abhs:BRS 268).⁴³ The first three latent tendencies (of sensual lust, of aversion, and of conceit) are mentioned in the Sall’atthana Sutta (S 36.6)⁴⁴ and the Cūḷa,vedalla Sutta (M 44), the latter of which says: “The latent tendency of sensual desire underlies pleasant feeling. The latent tendency of aversion underlies painful feeling. The latent tendency of ignorance underlies a neutral feeling” (M 44.25/1:303). The Majjhima Tīkā on this passage says that these three defilements are called “latent tendencies” in the sense that they have not been destroyed in the life-continuum (*bhav’āṅga*) to which they belong and because they are capable of arising when the conditions are right (MAṬ:Be 2:286).

The Visuddhi,magga explains how this happens by distinguishing three levels of defilements, that is, as follows:

- (1) The transgression level (*vītikamma*), a gross level of defilements, where they instigate unwholesome bodily and verbal action.
- (2) The obsession level (*pariyuṭṭhāna*), an obsessive level of defilements, where they arise to obsess and enslave the mind.⁴⁵
- (3) The latent level (*anusaya*), a subtle level of defilements, where they remain as latent disposition in the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*).

We had already mentioned the compound *adhīṭṭhānābhīnivesānusaya*,⁴⁶ translated as “the latent tendencies of mental standpoints and adherences” [1.2]. They are “mental standpoints” (*adhīṭṭhāna*)

⁴³ See also Abhs:BRS 172.

⁴⁴ S 36.6/4:207-210 = SD 5.5.

⁴⁵ This is referred to in Mahā Mālunkya S (M 64) in connection with the lower mental fetters (*oram,bhāgiya saṃyojanā*): self-identity view (*sakkāya,dīṭṭhī*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), attachment to rituals and vows (*silā-b,bata,parā-māsa*), sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), and ill will (*paṭigha*), “and he does not understand it as it really is the escape from the arisen (fetter), and when that (fetter) has become habitual and is not eliminated in him, it is a lower fetter” (M 64.5/1:434 f) [1.3]. On the later confusion btw *anusaya* and *pariyuṭṭhāna*, see Karunaratna 1965.

because they are the foundations for the unwholesome mind, and “adherence and latent tendencies” because they adhere to the mind and lie latent there (SA 2:259; NmA 2:310).

Evidently, this compound embodies the canonical roots for the commentarial conception of *the three levels of defilement*. The “mindset” or “mental standpoint” (*adhiṭṭhāna*) here refers to the motivation behind the gross level of transgressive defilement. “Adherence or habituation” (*abhinivesa*) refers to the motivation behind the habitual level of addictive or obsessive defilement. The “latent tendencies” (*anusayā*) lie dormant in the life-continuum (*bhav’ariga*), ready to rear their ugly heads and wreak havoc at the slightest instigation.⁴⁷

The gross level of transgressive defilement is prevented by the observance of moral precepts (*sīla*). *The habitual level of obsessive defilement* is surmounted through mental cultivation (*samādhi*). And *the subtle level of latent defilement* is overcome by insight wisdom (*paññā*) (Vism 1.13/5). These three levels of defilements are often referred to throughout the Commentaries.⁴⁸

2 The latent tendency of sensual lust

2.1 WHY WE LUST. The very first latent tendency is that of sensual lust (*kāma,rāgānusaya*). This is natural because all that we have are our six senses—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—that are relentlessly seeking for sense-objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and mind-objects. Every moment, the mind seeks to hold on to a mental object, as the Assutava Sutta 1 (S 12.61) says, just as a monkey clings on to one branch after another, swinging from tree to tree.⁴⁹

We are ruled impulsively by our senses because of our body, made up of the four elements—earth, water, fire, and wind (in simple terms, solidity, liquidity, heat and air)—which are the very same elements that surround and support us. So it is natural that we keep sensing the manifestations of such elements within and without ourselves.⁵⁰

But we are not just body; more importantly, we have a mind or consciousness. It is the mind that actually makes *sense* of our sense-experiences. The untrained and unawakened mind, unsure of the true nature of the four elements and of itself (as consciousness), keeps chasing after every object that it sees as pleasant, rejecting what it sees as unpleasant, and ignoring what it is unfamiliar with.⁵¹

Sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*) or sense-desire (*kāma,rāgānusaya*) is essentially craving (*taṇhā*; Skt *trṣṇā*), “thirst” at its most primal or most instinctive. In humans, this craving is enhanced and complicated by our *language*, which conjures up virtual realities in us. We tend to make more of our sense-experiences than they really are: basically, we fail to see the *impermanence* of such experiences. So we keep running after every external sense-object or sense-stimuli.

2.2 SELF-LUST AND OTHER-LUST. We are unable to see a sense-object as it really is because of our ignorance [8]. Craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) are the conjoined twins that sustain and perpetuate our existence. While *ignorance* is a sort of blindness, an inability to see beyond the surface of things, *craving* is the frantic survivor, always running after its selfish ends. Ignorance is blind and craving is lame. So ignorance carries craving on his shoulders; craving tells ignorance where to go, and ignorance blindly obeys.

A key characteristic of sensual lust is that it is always running after the past, even when it is looking to the future. Our sense of what is lasting, pleasant, essential or good is defined by what we *were* familiar with. So we end up repeating ourselves all our lives; that is why sensual lust never gets enough of itself. At its worst, it is an *existential narcissism*; at its best, it is an *external quest* for self-gratification. None of these can fill the self-created inner lack. The snake that painfully bites its own tail seeks nothing else but to end its own pain, but it only keeps on biting.

⁴⁶ Ie *adhiṭṭhāna* + *abhinivesa* + *anusaya*: S 2:17, 3:10, 135, 161; A 5:3.

⁴⁷ See Ledi Sayadaw, 1965: 56-60; 1986: 73-76 & Padmasiri de Silva 1992: 60 f.

⁴⁸ See also *Cāgānussati* = SD 15.11(2) Levels of practice.

⁴⁹ S 12.61.6-8/2:94 f = SD 20.2

⁵⁰ On the 4 elements, see *Rūpa (Form)* = SD 17.2a.

⁵¹ Further see *Vedanā* = SD 17.3.

The latent tendency of sensual lust is intimately linked with the arising of pleasant feelings. This relation, however, is not a necessary one, since some pleasant feelings, such as the bliss of dhyana or meditative absorption, do not activate this latent tendency.⁵² It is the Buddha's ability to distinguish between these two kinds of pleasures that decisively lead him to the middle way and awakening.⁵³

3 The latent tendency of aversion

3.1 PLEASURE AND PAIN ARE SIDES OF THE SAME COIN. That we have sensual desire necessarily means that we will also have aversion for what does not gratify our desires. Hence, the latent tendency of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*) goes with that of sensual lust [2]. In the **Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44), the nun Dhamma, dinnā explains to the layman Visākha that pleasure and pain are relative to one another:

Pleasant feeling, avuso Visākha, is pleasant when it persists, and painful when it changes.

Painful feeling is painful when it persists, and pleasant when it changes.

Neutral feeling is pleasant when there is knowledge of it, and painful when there is no knowledge of it. (M 44.24/1:303) = SD 40a.9

After that, she adds:

Avuso Visākha, the latent tendency of lust lies latent in a pleasant feeling.

The latent tendency of aversion lies latent in a painful feeling.

The latent tendency of ignorance lies latent in a neutral feeling. (M 44.25/1:303) = SD 40a.9

In the list of five latent tendencies given in the Mahā Māluṅkyaputta Sutta (M 64), ill will (*vyāpāda*) is the last one. In this particular instance, ill will replaces the more usual aversion (*paṭigha*), found in the well known list of seven underlying tendencies. [1.2]

The Mahā Māluṅkyaputta Sutta explains that even a tiny infant has an underlying tendency of aversion. This is so even though a newborn child does not yet have the perception of a "being," making it impossible for aversion towards other beings to actually arise in the child [1.3]. Thus aversion is a natural characteristic of unawakened beings, whether we are physically or mentally mature.⁵⁴

3.2 EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY. The Pāli term for aversion is *paṭigha*, which literally means "striking back." It connotes an instinctively *reactive* behaviour. This behaviour is based on a dualistic state of affairs. As we have stated [3.2], sensual lust and aversion are the opposite sides of the same coin. What we instinctively like defines what we would dislike. Sensual lust here is a pulling fact, while aversion is a pushing factor.

An emotionally reactive person instinctively reacts to any stimulus, both internal and external stimuli. When such a person is hurt or he fear, he at once seeks tries to hurt others or seek an external refuge. When he perceives others as hurting him, he at once hits back. Such a reactive behaviour is not only predictable but also subhuman, as he has no choice, as it were, but to act in that way. He has resigned himself to the lizard brain, and almost never uses the cerebral cortex.

Proper meditation is vitally healing here. Breath meditation stills and clears the mind, so that it is free of its reactivity, at least for the duration of the meditation. When the meditation is properly sustained, it becomes a positive habit that displaces the reactive tendencies.

This practice should be supported by lovingkindness practice, which is basically an unconditional acceptance of self and of others. Lovingkindness begins with unconditional self-acceptance, which sees no need for external domination. As we begin to see other just as we see ourselves in a wholesome manner, there is no more need to be reactive, as we have transcended the self-other duality.

⁵² **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.28/1:303 f) = SD 40a.9.

⁵³ See further *Kāma-c, chanda* = SD 32.2.

⁵⁴ See further, Analayo 2009: 44-56.

4 The latent tendency of conceit

4.1 THE THREEFOLD GRASPINGS. We may have weakened our sensual lust, and correspondingly, our aversion, too. And we might feel some sense of self-achievement here. Our feeling of self-importance, a sense of personal ability or excellence, even uniqueness, is usually too subtle or too overpowering to be noticed by us. We might gain a glimpse of in-sight into ourselves when someone points it out to us, but then again, the self's veto power is overwhelming. This is because of the latent tendency of conceit (*mānānusaya*).

Conceit is self-blinding and overpowering because it is very rare that we can really look *at*, much less, look *in* at ourselves. We are preoccupied with looking outwards, at others, measuring and comparing ourselves with others. So powerful is this tendency that the discourses, such as the Alagaddūpama Sutta (M 22) teaches that the five aggregates, each and every one of them, should be regarded as ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’⁵⁵

These three statements—“This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self”—are the respective opposites of the threefold graspings (*ti, vidha gāha*), namely,

“This is mine”	(<i>etam mama</i>)	(arises through craving, <i>taṇhā, gāha</i>)	= “mine-making”;
“This I am”	(<i>eso ’ham asmī</i>)	(arises through conceit, <i>māna, gāha</i>)	= “conceit”; and
“This is my self”	(<i>eso me attā</i>)	(arises through wrong view, <i>diṭṭhi, gāha</i>)	= “I-making.”

(Anattā, lakkhaṇa Sutta, S 3:68 = SD 1.2)

These three wrong attitudes are also known as the “latent tendencies to ‘I’-making, ‘mine’-making and conceit” (*ahaṇ. kāra, mamaṇ. kāra, mānānusaya*),⁵⁶ which is a more complex name for the latent tendency of conceit.

These threefold graspings are the main factors behind conception (*maññana*) (M 1) and mental proliferation (*papañca*) (M 18). In short, such experiences are not merely “beliefs” but are direct reactions to reality.⁵⁷

The Khemaka Sutta (S 22.89) uses a parable to show the difficulty of detecting the latent tendency of conceit (*mānānusaya*):

23 Avuso, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters,⁵⁸ yet in regards to the five aggregates of clinging, there still lingers in him a residual⁵⁹ conceit ‘I am,’ a desire ‘I am,’ a latent tendency ‘I am’ that has not yet been uprooted.

THE PERCEPTION OF IMPERMANENCE. Some time later he dwells contemplating arising and passing away in the five aggregates of clinging:

such is	<u>form,</u>	such its arising, [131]	such its passing away;
such are	<u>feelings,</u>	such their arising,	such their passing away;
such is	<u>perception,</u>	such its arising,	such its passing away;
such are	<u>formations,</u>	such their arising,	such their passing away;

⁵⁵ M 22.26 f/1:138 = SD 3.13.

⁵⁶ M 22.15, 72.15, 112.11 20, S 2:75, 3:236, 4:41, A 1:132, 133.

⁵⁷ See Bodhi, 1980b:8-11; Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f.

⁵⁸ “Fetters,” *saṃyojanā*, of which there are 10, that imprison one to the cyclic world of suffering. The 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojanā*) are: (1) Self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*) [see *Antā S* (S 22.103) = SD 14.1], (2) persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa, rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa, rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61; A 5:13; Vbh 377) [1.2]. In some places, no 5 (*kāma, rāga*) is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), so called because the lower realms, ie, the sense-worlds, and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*), so called because they bind one to the higher realms, ie, the form worlds and the formless worlds. On the sequence of the fetters broken by the saints, see *Kiṭṭāgiri S* (M 70) = SD 11.1 Intro (5) & *Ānāpānasati S*, M 118.8-12/3:80 f) = SD 7.13.

⁵⁹ “Residual,” *anusahagato*, which Comy glosses as *sukhumo*, “delicate,” ie fine or subtle (SA 2:315). This passage is qu at DhsA 244.

such is consciousness, such its arising, such its passing away.

24 As he dwells contemplating arising and passing away in the five aggregates of clinging, this residual conceit ‘I am,’ this desire ‘I am,’ this latent tendency ‘I am,’ that has not yet been uprooted become uprooted.

25 THE PARABLE OF THE CLOTH. Avuso, it is just like a piece of cloth, when it has become soiled and stained, its owners would hand it to a washerman. The washerman would scrub it evenly with cleaning salt, lye or cow-dung, and rinse it in clean water.

26 Even though that cloth would become pure and clean, it would still have a residual smell of the cleaning salt, lye or cow-dung that had not yet dissipated.

The washerman would then return it to the owners. The owners would then put it in a fragrant casket, and the residual smell of cleaning salt, lye or cow-dung that had not yet dissipated would dissipate.⁶⁰

27 Yet, avuso, although a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, yet in regards to the five aggregates of clinging, there still lingers in him a residual conceit ‘I am,’ a desire ‘I am,’ a latent tendency ‘I am’ that has not yet been uprooted.

Some time later, he dwells contemplating arising and passing away in the five aggregates of clinging:

such is <u>form</u> ,	such its arising,	such its passing away;
such are <u>feelings</u> ,	such their arising,	such their passing away;
such is <u>perception</u> ,	such its arising,	such its passing away;
such are <u>formations</u> ,	such their arising,	such their passing away;
such is <u>consciousness</u> ,	such its arising,	such its passing away.

As he dwells contemplating arising and passing away in the five aggregates of clinging, this residual conceit ‘I am,’ this desire ‘I am,’ this latent tendency ‘I am,’ that has not yet been uprooted would be uprooted.” (S 22.89.23-27/3:130 f) = SD 14.13

4.2 THE THREE COMPLEXES. Here we will briefly examine the second of the threefold graspings—that of “This I am” (*eso’ham asmī*)—which arises because of grasping through conceit (*māna, gāha*). When we hold the view, “This I am,” we are clinging to the notion of duality, that is, there is an “I” and “other” beyond the mere conventional usage of the words. In colloquial terms, this is the “judgemental” mentality, or the “this is my personality” attitude, that is, we measure ourself against others following these three discriminations,⁶¹ along with their psychological cognates:

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) “I am better than...” | (<i>seyyo’ham asmī ti</i>) | superiority complex; |
| (2) “I am equal with [the same as]...” | (<i>sadiso’ham asmī ti</i>) | equality complex; and |
| (3) “I am inferior to...” | (<i>hīno’ham asmī ti</i>) | inferiority complex. |

In the (Māna) Soṇa Sutta (S 22.49), the Buddha declares that recluses and brahmins who fail to see the impermanence, unsatisfactory and changing nature of the five aggregates, on the basis of form, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness compare themselves as being better than, or equal to, or inferior to one another.⁶²

⁶⁰ Comy: The worldling’s mental process is like the soiled cloth. The 3 contemplations (of impermanence, of suffering and of not-self) are like the three cleansers (cleaning salt, lye and cow-dung). The non-returner’s mental process is like the cloth that has been washed with the 3 cleansers. The defilements to be removed by the path of arhathood are like the residual smell of the cleansers. The knowledge of the path of arhathood is like the fragrant chest. The destruction of all defilements by the path is like the dissipation of the residual smell of the three cleansers from the cloth after it has been placed in the chest. (SA 2:317)

⁶¹ The 3 conceits are also called “the three discriminations” (*tayo vidhā*): see **Samiddhi S** (S 1.20/1:12) = SD 21.4. The 3 are listed at: D 33.1.10(23)/3:216; S 22.49/3:48 (×4), 35.108/4:88 (×5), 45.162.5:56, 46.41/5:98; A 4.185/2:176 f (×2); Tha 1079; Nm 1:80 (×4), 107, 194, 195, 196, 244, 251, 2:350, 413, 426 (×3), 443.

⁶² S 22.49/3:48 = SD 31.13.

The latent tendencies, as unconscious mental roots of motivation, work in tandem with one another, in one way or another. **The Taṇhā Māna Sutta** (A 6.106), for example, lists the triad of cravings together with the triad of conceits, thus:

The 3 cravings

- (1) The craving for sense-pleasure (*kāma, taṇhā*),
- (2) The craving for existence (*bhava, taṇhā*),⁶³ [7]
- (3) The craving for annihilation (*vibhava, taṇhā*), and

The 3 conceits [complexes]

- (1) Conceit (*māna*),⁶⁴
- (2) Inferiority conceit (*omāna*),
- (3) Superiority conceit (*atimāna*), (A 6.106/3:445)

and ends up by saying that the three cravings should be abandoned, and the three conceits should be penetrated. Accomplished in both, we bring an end to suffering (that is, attain arhathood).

The latent tendency of conceit also function with those of the lust for existence (*bhava, rāgānusaya*) and of view (*diṭṭhānusaya*). The three are all connected to and interconnected by a sense of self-identity (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*) [6.2]. Such a self-view can range from an innocuous sense of self-satisfaction to an insidious self-glorification.

The three discriminations or measuring of self with others are false and harmful because of the way they are done. When we feel that we are better than someone else, or as good as him, or inferior to him, *what are our parameters?* What are we comparing? The point is that whatever we truly have are our six senses and the six sense-objects, and our feelings and perceptions of them. But none of these are permanent. At best we are only comparing perceptions and appearances, and they all change at the time.

The ironic thing about conceit is that they are actually *self-defeating*. Although a conceited person is *self-centred*, he really has *no* sense of self. In fact, such a person is always dependent on others to define himself. He is often so busy in trying to keep ahead or abreast of others, and fearing to lag behind, that he almost never sees any wholesome quality in himself. So powerful is the latent tendency of conceit, that it is destroyed only in the arhat.⁶⁵

5 The latent tendency of views

5.1 WRONG VIEW. We have already notes that latent tendencies often work with one another [5.2]. This is certainly the case with the latent tendency of views (*diṭṭhānusaya*), which connives with the latent tendencies of conceit and of the lust for existence.⁶⁶ These three are all connected to and interconnected by a sense of self-identity (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*) [4.2].

In a sense, our mind is like a voyeur in a secret chamber with five sophisticated consoles for monitoring sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches around us. Since we are secretly locked up in our own room, we can only helplessly watch the console monitors, and can really do nothing about what we see there. We can only form ideas about what we see in these five console monitors.

As Paul Fuller suggests, “the corruption [*āsava*] of views is the attachment to knowledge” (2005: 79). The existential voyeur is driven to collect views and knowledge, because none of them really gratify him. This is because the sixth console—that monitoring of our own minds—is not working. So we have no idea what really is going on in ourselves (or outside). In fact, whatever we see in the five consoles are our

⁶³ By itself, ie as a latent tendency, *bhava, taṇhā* is called *bhava, rāga*, which includes both the other two cravings. [7]

⁶⁴ Here, clearly, *māna* refers to “equality conceit,” but by itself can refer to any of the three.

⁶⁵ See further, **Me: The nature of conceit** = SD 19.2a.

⁶⁶ Gethin observes that “*diṭṭhi* can only be present in the mind when greed and attachment occur” (1997: 218). See also Paul Fuller 2005: 78-91.

own perceptions and notions of the five physical sense-experiences. We rarely, if ever, venture out into the fresh and open air of reality out there. So we are trapped in our own virtual world of self-made views.

In a sense, *all views are false views*.⁶⁷ Maybe that is why we feel so self-righteous when we patronize a particular guru, or have our own web-site, or address a crowd. Our starving self feels well fed, gratified, for the moment. But what are we really doing here? We are trying to extend our sense of self (or lack of it) over society and cyber-space; so we think. That is, until a clear understanding dawns upon us through a direct experience of true reality.

5.2 SELF-IDENTITY VIEW. The most insidious of views is self-view, or more exactly, self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*). This is the view that tells us: *I exist; listen to me; this is my body; I am a male or a female, famous or important; this girl or guy is mine; I have cash, credit cards, a car, a condominium, and country club membership.* The next thing that self-identity view does is to make us talk about these things, or hear others talk about these things, that define our selfhood. Then, to crown it all, perhaps, we might look for a religion or at least a guru who endorses all our self-views; or, better, if we have enough money and charisma, to start our own religion or temple. This explains why there are so many money-generated and money-generating Buddhisms and religions today.

The Isi,datta Sutta 2 (S 41.3) states that when there is self-identity view, the ten “unanswered questions” (*avyākata*)⁶⁸ and the 62 bases for wrong views of the Brahma,jāla Sutta (D 1)⁶⁹ arise.⁷⁰ Self-identity view, in other words, is the source of worldly discourse.

Again we need to remind ourselves that whatever self-view that can arise, always has to do with one of the five aggregates: form, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness. Or, more simply put, whatever self-identity view we might have, has to do with our physical being or mental state: either way, it is impermanent, and what is impermanent is unsatisfactory, and what is impermanent and unsatisfactory has not abiding entity or self.⁷¹

5.3 RIGHT VIEW IS TO BE PRACTISED. Religion, like any human discourse, makes use of views, and *right view* is especially valued in Buddhism. However, even right view, if taken dogmatically, that is, as a tool of crowd control and economic growth, rather than of spiritual renunciation and personal growth, becomes negative. For this reason, in the Alagaddûpama Sutta (M 22), the Buddha, using the parable of the raft, reminds us to use the Dharma only as a tool, like a raft, to cross over the waters of suffering.⁷²

And having understood the parable of the raft, admonishes the Buddha, “you should abandon even the dharmas, how much more that which is not dharmas!” (id).⁷³

Holding on to right view makes fanatics of us; letting go of right view liberates us. The purpose of Buddha Dharma is not merely to give up wrong view and gain right view. Both are *views* all the same. In meditation training, serious practitioners know that we can only truly focus after we have let go of both wrong views and right views. Any kind of view entails words and ideas, which hinders us from a direct experience of true reality.

Buddhist training may begin with right view, but we need to go beyond right view, and see our bodies and minds wholesomely developed. Right view, in other words, “is *practised*, not adopted or believed

⁶⁷ See Piya Tan, *Simple Joys*, 2009: 156-158 (11.4).

⁶⁸ See **The Unanswered Questions** = SD 40a.10.

⁶⁹ See **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1/1:1-46) = SD 25.

⁷⁰ S 41.3/4:285-288 = SD 65.11.

⁷¹ For a study, see Paul Fuller 2005: 26-40.

⁷² M 22.13/1:134 f = SD 3.13 & M 38.14/1:260 f = SD 7.10.

⁷³ *Dhammā pi vo pahātabbā pag’eva adhammā*. Comy takes *dhammā* (pl) here to mean “good states,” ie calm and insight (*samatha, vipassanā*), citing Laṭutikôpama S (M 66.26-33/1:455) as an example of the teaching of the abandonment of attachment to calm, and **Mahā Taṇhāsāṅkhaya S** (M 38.14/1:260 f = SD 7.10) as one of the abandonment of attachment to insight. Bodhi, however, is of the view that “*dhamma* here signifies not good states themselves, but the teachings, the correct attitude to which was delineated just above in the simile of the snake.” (M:NB 1209 n255). This parable of the raft is sometimes misquoted—eg by IB Horner (1950:1), Dharmasiri (1986:183)—to mean that the arhat, being “beyond good and evil” is above morality: see Keown 1992:92-102 for a detailed study. See SD 3.13 Intro (3).

in.”⁷⁴ To truly have right view is to have *no view*, but it is not having an empty head: it is the conduct of a liberated saint who is both wise and compassionate, like the Buddha.

6 The latent tendency of doubt

6.1 BAD DOUBTS. When the latent tendency of doubt (*vicikicchā’nusaya*) appear as a mental hindrance (*samyojana*), it can manifest in connection with internal or with external phenomena.⁷⁵ The commentary to the Pariyāya Sutta (S 46.52) explains that the “internal” phenomena that are doubted refer to our own five aggregates (whether they are truly impermanent, etc), and the “external” phenomena refers to the “great doubt” (*mahā vicikicchā*) about eight points, that is, the Three Jewels, the training, the past, the present, the future,⁷⁶ and dependent arising (SA 2:309, 3:170).

Understandably, a well known imagery for doubt is a fork on the road.⁷⁷ This may represent these two kinds of doubts, but more commonly refers to the fact that we have to make important choices at some point in our life’s journey. The choice is difficult, or wrong, when we are spiritually ignorant; or worse, having made the wrong choice, we are convinced that it is the right one, which is *delusion*.

Ignorance (*avijjā*) here refers to a lack of spiritual understanding (or better, experience) of the four noble truths [8.2]. An academic or intellectual understanding of the truths, no matter how sophisticated, is still speculative: they may be “right view: but they are still views. [8.2]

The first noble truth—the statement on suffering—should be *understood*. Here, it refers to the *dynamic* nature of life itself, or more technically, the nature of the five aggregates. The second noble truth—the arising of suffering, that is, craving—is to be *abandoned*. The third noble truth—the ending of suffering, that is, nirvana—is to be *realized*. And the fourth noble truth—the path leading to the ending of suffering, that is, the noble eightfold path—is to be *realized*.⁷⁸ In short, they are practical realities we have to deal with, if we wish to be liberated from suffering.

The latent tendency of doubt often works closely with the latent tendency of views. In other words, doubts often arise in us on account of our views. **The Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38), for example, records that the monk Sāti (driven by the view of self-identity) holds the wrong view that it is the same consciousness that continues after death.⁷⁹

Another case of pernicious doubt, recorded in the Alagaddūpama Sutta (M 22), relates how the misguided monk Ariṭṭha thinks that sexuality is not an obstacle to the spiritual life, despite having taken the monastic vows of celibacy.⁸⁰ In the Kosambiya Sutta (M 48), the Buddha says that a mind that is troubled by doubts and speculations is said to be an “obsessed mind” (*pariyuṭṭhita,citta*).⁸¹

The Brahma,jāla Sutta (D 1), in its analysis of the 62 bases for wrong view, describes the effects of doubts arising from ignorance, leading to prevarication, thus:

And, thirdly, based on what, invoking what, do the good recluses and brahmins, when questioned about one point or other, resort, on four grounds, to evasive statements and to endless hedging?

Here, bhikshus, a certain recluse or brahmin does not understand according to reality, “This is wholesome”; he does not know according to reality, “This is unwholesome.” He thinks thus:

“I do not know according to reality what is wholesome or what is unwholesome.

⁷⁴ Paul Fuller 2005: 1 (italics added), also 55, 65, 125 f.

⁷⁵ **Pariyāya S**, S 46.52/5:110 = SD 62.6.

⁷⁶ On doubts about the past, present and future, see “the 3 darknesses” (*tama*) (D 33.1.10(29)/3:217); cf S 42.-11/4:327.

⁷⁷ See **Vammika S** (M 23.4/1:144) = SD 28.13 & (**Thīna,middha**) **Tissa S** (S 22.84/3:108) = SD 32.12.

⁷⁸ See **Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana S** (S 56.11.9-12/5:422) = SD 1.1.

⁷⁹ M 38/1:256-271 = SD 7.10.

⁸⁰ M 22/1:130-142 = SD 3.13.

⁸¹ M 48.8/1:323 = SD 64.1.

Now, there are recluses and brahmins who are wise, subtle, experienced in debate, who go about shooting down, indeed, tearing asunder, the views of others with their wisdom.⁸² They might cross-examine me, ask me for reasons, invite me to address issues therein.⁸³

But when cross-examined, asked for reasons, invited to address issues therein, *I am unable to answer them.*

Should I be unable to answer, it would vex me.

Such vexation would be an obstacle for me.”

As such, out of fear of being cross-examined, loathing cross-examination,⁸⁴ he does not expound what is wholesome or what is unwholesome. And when questioned about one point or other, he resorts to evasive statements and to endless hedging, thus:

“I do not take it as this. I do not take it as that. I do not take it as otherwise. I do not take it to be not so. I do not take it to be not not so.”

This, bhikkhus, is the third reason, based on which, invoking which, [27] some recluses and brahmins, when questioned about one point or other, resort to evasive statements and to endless hedging. (D 1.2.26.64/1:26 f) = SD 25

6.2 GOOD DOUBTS. On various occasions, when his audience complain that they have uncertainties and doubts, the Buddha would answer that they rightfully doubt as “doubt has arisen in you over what is doubtful.”⁸⁵ In other words, not all doubt are blameworthy.

The **Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) records that even during his last moments, the Buddha resolves the doubts of the wanderer Subhadda so that he is the last candidate to go forth before the Buddha (D 2:149). Later, the Buddha encourages the assembly to voice any doubt they have, so that it could be clarified as long as he is still alive (D 2:155). Thus, although the arising of doubt is an obstruction to deeper concentration and insight, it is an occasion for investigation, leading to matters that should be investigated.

The commentary on the Āhāra Sutta (S 46.51)⁸⁶ gives the following six things that conduce to the abandoning doubt, namely:

- (1) great learning;
- (2) counter-questioning (regarding the aggregates, elements, sense-bases, etc);
- (3) knowledge of [monastic or lay] Vinaya practice;
- (4) conviction [commitment to the spiritual life];
- (5) spiritual friendship;
- (6) suitable talk. (SA 3:168)

The **Pāṛileyya Sutta** (S 22.81) explains that doubt like other defilements is a formation (*saṅkhāra*), and as such should be regarded as impermanent, thus:

29 That uncertainty, doubt, indecision in regard to the true Dharma is a formation.

That formation—what is its source, what is its origin, from what is it born and produced?

When the uninstructed ordinary person is touched by a feeling born of contact connected with ignorance, craving arises: from there is born that formation.⁸⁷

30 Thus, monks, that formation is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen;

⁸² *Santi hi kho pana samaṇa, brāhmaṇā paṇḍitā nipuṇā kata, para-p, pavādā vāda, vedhī, rūpā vobhindantā maññe caranti paññā, gatenā diṭṭhi, gatāni.*

⁸³ *Ye mañ tattha samanuyūjeyyūṃ samanugāheyyūṃ samanubhāseyyūṃ.*

⁸⁴ *Anuyoga, bhayā anuyoga, parijegucchā.*

⁸⁵ *Kaṅkhanīye ca pana te ṭhāne vicikicchā uppannā ti, S 42.13.42/4:350 = SD 35.4a; 44.9.12a/4:399 = SD 23.-15; A 31.3a/1:189 = SD 35.4a.*

⁸⁶ S 46.51.19/5:106 = SD 7.15.

⁸⁷ Comy: Even though doubt (*vicikicchā*) does not exist in the citta [“minds”] associated with craving, the doubt-formation arises from it because craving has not been abandoned. For, doubt arises in one who has not abandoned craving. (SA 2:306)

that craving	is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen;
that feeling	is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen;
that contact	is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen;
that ignorance	is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen.

When one knows and sees thus, monks, there is the immediate destruction of the mental influxes.
(S 22.81/3:99) = SD 6.1

Even if we do not attain arhathood, doubt is can be fully destroyed in the streamwinner. The Sabb' - āsava Sutta (M 2) gives seven methods of overcoming "all the influxes" (*sabb'āsava*), and the very first is that of overcoming them by "seeing" (*dassana*), that is, overcoming doubts. Various kinds of doubting are listed arising through unwise consideration (*ayoniso manasikāra*), and how they are overcome through wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Practising wise attention in this way brings about seeing or direct vision of true reality, which leads to streamwinning.⁸⁸

7 The latent tendency of lust for existence

7.1 EGO-DRIVEN VIEWS. The latent tendency of lust for existence (*bhava, rāgānusaya*) is the seventh and last of the latent tendencies, which it lies very deep in the unconscious and has the most powerful hold upon us, second only to ignorance, the last of the latent tendencies. Psychologically, it is *the* ego-instinct, an abiding self-love that keeps us going.

The function of the ego-instinct is self-construction (*aham, kāra*). This most commonly manifests itself as the lust for sense-pleasures (*kāma, tanhā*), the collecting of sense-experiences perceives as pleasant. The lust for sense-pleasure or sensual craving arises in connection with any of the six senses, resulting in altogether six modes of craving on account of each sense-object. These are the six "bodies of craving" (*tanhā, kāyā*), comprising craving for forms (*rūpa, tanhā*), for sounds (*sadda, tanhā*), for smells (*gandha, tanhā*), for tastes (*rasa, tanhā*), for touches (*phoṭṭhabba, tanhā*), and for mind-objects (*dhamma, tanhā*).⁸⁹

The lust for sense-pleasures keeps up caught up and tied down with the self-centred sense-world. This reinforces the meaning or value of our existence (*bhava*), giving us the false or wishful notion of an abiding that enjoys all these pleasures. This is called the "existence view" (*bhava, diṭṭhi*), which is more commonly known as the "eternalist view" (*sassata, diṭṭhi*), that is, the belief in an unchanging entity (such as a soul) that exists independent of the five aggregates (the body-mind processes constituting life) and continues after death.

As long as we are enjoying some gratifying level of sense-pleasure or self-satisfaction, and life seems meaningful. However, this is not always the case: we may be denied such pleasures (such as through ill health, relationship difficulties, or economic problems) or we simply do not seem to be able to attract pleasurable people, things and experiences. This may come to such a level, that we lost faith in ourselves, or even hate ourselves. Life seems meaningless, and we contemplate ending it all.

What is interesting here is that a person could end his life here thinking that the ensuing rebirth would be a better one. But the point is that this is unlikely because suicide victims rarely die happy; so the rebirth would not be a happy one.⁹⁰

On the other hand, the self-hating person could hold the view that this our only life: end it, and we end it all. This is the "annihilationist view" (*uccheda, diṭṭhi*), that is, the wrong view that the self, whether it is identical with the five aggregates or not, is annihilated at death.⁹¹

7.2 THE 3 CRAVINGS. In theoretical discussions, the latent tendency of existence is broken up, as we have seen [8.1], into the three kinds of craving, that is, *the cravings for sense-pleasure, for existence, and for annihilation* [5.2], as these are really three different aspects of the lust for existence. Now, the Vibh-aṅga defines the three cravings as follows (abridged):

⁸⁸ M 2.5-11/1:7-9 = SD 30.3. See further Analayo 2009: 70-76.

⁸⁹ Eg Saṅgīti S (D 33.2.2(8)/3:244).

⁹⁰ See Piya Tan, *Simple Joys*, 2009: 17-19 (2.4).

⁹¹ See Dhamma, cakka-pavattana S (S 56.11.6/5:421) = SD 1.1; also Saṅgīti S (D 33.1.10(16)/3:216).

- (1) the craving for existence is the lust of a mind attended the existence view (*bhava, diṭṭhi*);
- (2) the craving for annihilation is the lust of a mind attended by the annihilation view (*uccheda, - diṭṭhi*); and
- (3) the craving for sense-pleasure is the lust of a mind yoked to the sense-world (*kāma, dhātu, paṭi-saṃyutta*).

Craving for existence can be for rebirth in a form-sphere or formless sphere, on account of, respectfully, a craving for form (*rūpa, taṇhā*) and craving for the formless (*arūpa, taṇhā*), which **the Saṅgīti-Sutta** lists with craving for cessation (*nirodha, taṇhā*), “craving for cessation.”⁹² This sort of craving is mostly found in meditators, or the inhabitants of the form or the formless worlds, that is, a desire to attain higher levels of being, but neither understanding the real reason nor making the right effort.

The God-believers of our time who do not meditate generally have no idea of the form and the formless worlds. The kind of heaven they envision would be at best that of the sense-world (that is, if they have accumulated the right karma to be reborn there). Their view is that such a heavenly life is eternal, and as such is overwhelmed by the wrong view of eternalism (*sassata, diṭṭhi*), which ironically would in fact hinder them from being reborn there!

Craving for non-existence (*vibhava, taṇha*) is a kind of death-wish or desire “to end it all,” that is, a craving for annihilation in a materialist as well as a spiritual sense. This is the wrong view of annihilationism (*uccheda, diṭṭhi*), which could range from the wish to destroy ourselves by suicide or euthanasia, thinking that we would abandon the self (for a materialist), or by way of a religious suicide, hoping to merge or be in companionship with a supreme reality (like Brahman or God).

The key factor behind all such modes of craving is a view of a self that abides behind them. From a Buddhist perspective, “all these forms of craving are but manifestations of ignorance, since however refined the experience they aim at may be, the truth of the matter is that there was never a self to be annihilated in the first place.” (Analyo 2009: 22)

7.3 THE DESIRE FOR BECOMING. The word *bhava* can also be translated as “becoming,” which helps us understanding the latent tendency of existence better. In simple terms, this is an unbridled desire for self-promotion or over-ambitiousness. On a deeper level, a person troubled by *psychological obsession*, or even *emotional transgression* [1.5], triggered by the latent tendency of existence, would be restless with over-assertiveness or over-ambitiousness. **The Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2) gives us a good idea of how, on account of wrong attention, wrong views reinforce our latent tendency for existence by way of the “sixteen doubts,” thus,

- (1) ‘Was I in the past?’
- (2) ‘Was I not in the past?’
- (3) ‘What was I in the past?’
- (4) ‘How was I in the past?’⁹³
- (5) ‘Having been what, did I become in the past? [What was I before I became that in the past?]
- (6) ‘Will I be in the future?’
- (7) ‘Am I not in the future?’
- (8) ‘What will I be in the future?’
- (9) ‘How will I be in the future?’
- (10) ‘Having been what, what will I become in the future? [What now would lead me to that future state?]

Or else, right now he inwardly has doubts about the present, thus:

- (11) ‘Am I?’⁹⁴

⁹² D 33.1.10(16)/3:216.

⁹³ Comy: eg “What was I like, tall or short, fair or dark?” (MA 1:69).

⁹⁴ Comy: He doubt his own aggregates, or his own existence (MA 1:69).

- (12) ‘Am I not?’
 (13) ‘What am I?’
 (14) ‘How am I?’
 (15) ‘Where has this being come from?’
 (16) ‘Where will it [this being] go?’

(M 2.7/1:8) = SD 30.3⁹⁵

The Sabb’āsava Sutta goes on to say that to give up these sixteen doubt, we should avoid wrong attention (not to pay attention to unwholesome states), and should practise wise attention. This is best done in reflecting on the four noble truths. In doing so, we would be able to break the first three fetters, namely, those of the self-identity view, spiritual doubt, and attachment to rituals and vows, which makes us streamwinners.⁹⁶

A full understanding the four noble truths entails spiritual liberation by way of streamwinning because we have overcome wrong view so that our lives have changed to a higher spiritual level. However, this may not always be easy, when we only have an academic or intellectual understanding of the truths. For, spiritual ignorance remains, and we are still under the power of the latent tendency of ignorance.⁹⁷

8 The latent tendency of ignorance

8.1 WHAT IS *AVIJJĀ*? In what is traditionally regarded as the Buddha’s first discourse, the root-cause of suffering is stated to be “craving” (*taṇhā*).⁹⁸ Moreover, in such discourses as the **Mahā,nidāna Sutta** (D 15), the dependent arising formula is not only shorter, but also does not mention *avijjā* (Skt *avidyā*), which is here translated as “ignorance.”⁹⁹ This has led scholars such as Bimal Krishna Matilal to examine the proper definition and usage of *avijjā* (1980). Matilal’s study is quite thorough but is meant for the academic. Here I will only cull what is useful for our understanding of the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjā’nusaya*).

Matilal bases most of his arguments on Vasubandhu’s **Abhidharma,kośa Bhāṣya** where, as in early Buddhism, *avidyā* (Skt) is listed both as one of the principal latent tendencies (Skt *anusāya*) or defilements (Skt *kleśa*)¹⁰⁰ and as the last factor of dependent arising.¹⁰¹ A few interesting remarks by Matilal are worth noting.

Firstly, he says that although *āvijjā/avidyā* is “grammatical negative” (formed with a negative prefix), it does not mean negation or absence of lack of anything.¹⁰² “But in Buddhism a non-entity or non-existence cannot (causally) condition another thing” (1980: 156). Secondly, “following Patañjali, we will have to say that ‘avidyā’ refers to what can be mistaken as *vidyā* [Skt]” (id). That is, if we take *vidyā* (P *vijjā*) to mean knowledge of true reality; then *avijjā* “will mean something that is liable to be mistaken as such” (id).

8.2 THE PERVASIVE NATURE OF IGNORANCE. As an overview of the nature of the negative particle in Sanskrit, Pali and related Indian languages, I would agree with Matilal. But it is so simple when we apply such general principles to a particular case, such as *avijjā*, as used by the early Buddhists. Let me

⁹⁵ This passage on the “16 doubts” is found in **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2.7 f/1:8), **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38.-23/1:265) & **Paccaya S** (S 12.20/2:26 f). In **Paccaya S** (S 12.20), it is said that one who sees dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) with right wisdom would not speculate in these ways (S 12.20.18-20/2:26 f). See **Bhadd’eka,-ratta S** (M 131) = SD 8.9 Intro (3). See **Vicikicchā** = SD 32.8.

⁹⁶ M 2.11/1:9 = SD 30.3.

⁹⁷ On the latent tendency of existence, see further Silva 1992: 119-152.

⁹⁸ *History of Indian Philosophy* (tr VM Bedekar, Delhi) vol 1 (E Frauwallner) 1973: 150-269.

⁹⁹ D 15.2-20/2:55-62 = SD 5.16 Intro (30). See eg Nakamura 1980.

¹⁰⁰ Abhk 5(1d-2a) = Abhk:Pr 772.

¹⁰¹ Abhk 3 (21a) = Abhk:Pr 403; 3 (28a-b) = Abhk:Pr 419.

¹⁰² He quotes Vāsudeva Dikṣita’s *Bāla,manorama, comy on Bhaṭṭoji’x Siddhanta,kaumudī* which gives these 6 different meanings of the negative particle: similarity, absence, otherness (difference), diminution, impropriety (or reproach), and opposition (contrariety), *Vaiyākaraṇa-Siddhāntakaumudī* (ed G Sharma & P Sharma, Benares) pt 2 1941: 75. See also his *The Navya-nyāya Doctrine of Negation*, Cambridge, MA, 1968: 148.

start by referring to the well-known infant imagery in the **Mahā Māluṅkyaputta Sutta** (M 64), where the Buddha declares that even though a young helpless infant does *not* have the notions of “self-identity,” of “things,” of “virtue,” of “sense-desire,” and of “a being,” yet he still has the respective latent tendencies of self-identity view, of doubt, of attachment to rituals and vows, of sense-desire, and of ill will [1.3]. In this sense, it is meaningful to say that the infant is “ignorant” because he has *no* knowledge of these things.

Another important facet of *avijjā* is referred to in the **Cūla Vedalla Sutta** (M 44), where the nun Dhamma, dinnā tells the layman Visākha that the latent tendency of ignorance lies latent in a neutral feeling. The Pali word for “neutral” here is *adukkham-asukha*, “neither painful nor pleasant,” which is a double negation. Here again is a clear example of a lack of knowledge of an experience, that is, *not* experiencing pain and *not* experiencing pleasure, which is said to be *neutral*. The failure to regard such an experience as being impermanent, conduces reinforces the latent tendency of ignorance.¹⁰³

The early discourses often define ignorance (*avijjā*) contextually. The **Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta** (M 9), for example, Sāriputta analyses ignorance using the four-truth template: a noble disciple *who understands ignorance, the arising of ignorance, the ending of ignorance, and the way leading to the end of ignorance*, is said to have right view. Ignorance is then defined as not understanding the four truths. Then, he declares:

With the arising of the influxes, there is the arising of ignorance.
With the ending of the influxes, there is the ending of ignorance.

67 Avuso, when a noble disciple
understands ignorance thus,
understands the arising of ignorance thus,
understands the ending of ignorance thus, and
understands the way leading to the ending of ignorance thus,
he utterly abandons the latent tendency of lust,
he removes the latent tendency of aversion,
he abolishes the latent tendency of the view and conceit ‘I am,’
and by abandoning ignorance and rousing true knowledge, he makes an end of suffering here and
now. (M 9.65-67/1:54) = SD 11.14

As such, *avijjā* is commonly defined as the lack of understanding of the four noble truths,¹⁰⁴ which is the most basic condition for samsaric existence. These definitions here, notes Bodhi, “show that the view of self is an aspect of clinging, which is itself conditioned by craving, while the latter is in turn conditioned by ignorance” (S:B 728 n8). For these reasons, too, Buddhaghosa says that ignorance should not be regarded as the “causeless root-cause of the world...it is not causeless,” quoting the **Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta** passage (Vism 17.36-37/525).

The **Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) Sutta** (A 6.63), on the other hand, using the four-truth template, explains that the “source of arising” (*nidāna, sambhava*) of influxes is ignorance. Hence, with the ending of ignorance, there is the ending of the influxes.¹⁰⁵ As such, we see an interdependent arising of the two, ignorance and the influxes. Or rather, they feed or support each another, as explained in the **Avijjā Sutta** (A 10.61) and the **Taṇhā Sutta** (A 10.62).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ M 44.25/1:303 = SD 40a.9.

¹⁰⁴ (**Paṭicca,samuppāda**) **Vibhaṅga S** (S 12.2/2:4) = SD 5.15; Vbh 135. See also (**Pubbaṅgamā**) **Avijjā S** (S 45.1/5:1); (**Āhāra**) **Avijjā S** (A 10.61/5:116) = SD 31.10]. Cf def of *right view* as the understanding of the 4 noble truths: **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.21/2:311 f) = SD 13.2; **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141.24/3:251) = SD 11.11. Cf **Mahā Cattārisaka S** (M 117/3:71-78) = SD 6.10;

¹⁰⁵ A 6.63.9-10/3:414 = SD 6.11.

¹⁰⁶ A 10.61/5:113-116 = SD 31.10 & A 10.62/5:116-119 = SD 31.11.

8.3 DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF TRUE REALITY. In the context of early Buddhism, *avijjā* is perfectly meaningful being translated as “ignorance.”¹⁰⁷ In this case, we need to be aware of two aspects of ignorance:

(1) *lack of knowledge* of true reality (eg as defined in the four noble truths); and

(2) *mistaking false knowledge* for true knowledge, that is, a misunderstanding of the four noble truths. We have already discussed (1) [8.2]. The second kind of ignorance is better known as “delusion” (*moha*). This distinction is useful because ignorance, as a latent tendency, embodies both a sort of blindness or not knowing the four truths, or a kind of blurred or distorted vision of them. It is this second form of ignorance, as delusion, that is active on a pre-conscious level, which moves us to break any of the precepts or commit an unwholesome act.

It can be said that we do not so much of “get rid” of ignorance (since there is *no* knowledge there), as we should *cultivate* right view, which leads us to spiritual liberation. Paul Fuller makes an interesting proposal that the influx of views is “the attachment to knowledge,” and that the influx of ignorance is “false knowledge itself” (200: 79) [6.1].

The first step to wisdom is to acknowledge our ignorance, but this is usually only a *word* level of learning. The next stage is to straighten what we have learned, and link the strands of wisdom together for a bigger and clearer picture: this is the *mind* level of learning, best done with a spiritual friend and with our own meditation. And finally there is the *wholesome change* in our actions, speech and mind. Right view, as such, is not a proposition; it is not about *knowing* something (such as Buddhism, etc), but a wholesome change that we experience and remains with us, making us better individuals, even saints.

9 Overcoming latent tendencies

The latent tendencies are the roots of suffering. They keep us in a loop of not-knowing, an emptiness that feeds on itself, so that we are merely self-inflated bubbles of self-importance, boiling over with busyness, signifying nothing. We turn to pleasure, wealth, power, philosophy, religion, science, or selfishness, but these are at best *symptomatic* respites. When we understand our latent tendencies, we begin to work at *radically* healing ourselves: we get to the roots of our personality.

The latent tendencies are overcome by the practitioner gradually and in part. The streamwinner (*sotāpanna*) and the once-returner (*sākad’āgāmi*), for example, have overcome the latent tendencies (4) of view and (5) of doubt. The once-returner, however, has also weakened the three roots of greed, hate and delusion. But he still has latent tendencies 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7.

The non-returner (*anāgāmi*) has overcome lust, which means that he is also free from aversion and related defilements. The two latent tendencies go together. He still has only latent tendencies (3) of conceit, (6) of lust for existence, and (7) of ignorance, which are very subtle but powerful defilements that are overcome only by the arhat (*arahata*), that is, upon full awakening. (Pm 2:36-38)

One of the oldest list of latent tendencies is perhaps the list of two, found in **the Kaccāna.gotta Sutta** (S 12.15)¹⁰⁸ and the Channa Sutta (S 22.90),¹⁰⁹ namely, the latent tendency of mindset and of adherence (*cetaso adhiṭṭhānam abhinivesānusayam*). The Buddha describes one with right view (in terms of latent tendencies) in the following way:

This world, Kaccāna, is mostly bound by mental fixation [attachment], clinging and adherence.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Meaning-to-meaning translation is not always possible when the host language does not have the same experience of the word or passage: if this were the case, computerized translations would be easier and better than human translation. The translator’s skill lies in how he conveys the intended meaning or purpose of the passage, and also its aesthetics or “feeling,” that is, *how* the passage is spoken or narrated. See eg the Humpty Dumpty rule:

Saṅṅā = SD 17.4 (2.3).

¹⁰⁸ S 12.15/2:17 = SD 6.13.

¹⁰⁹ S 22.90/3:135 = SD 56.5.

¹¹⁰ “bound...adherence,” PTS *upāy’upādānābhinivesa,vinibandha*, but preferred reading is Be Ce *upāy’upādānābhinivesa,vinibaddha* = *upāya* (attachment, fixation) + *upādāna* (clinging) + *abhinivesa* (adherence) + *vinī-*

But this person (with right view) does not engage in, cling to, incline towards, that fixation and clinging, that latent tendency of mindset and of adherence—he does not take a stand (that anything is) “my self.”¹¹¹

He has neither uncertainty nor doubt that what arises is only suffering arising, what ceases is only suffering ceasing.¹¹² His knowledge about this is independent of others.¹¹³

(S 12.15.6/2:17 = S 22.90/3:135) = SD 16.13

— — —

baddha (bound, shackled) [alt reading *vinibandha*, bondage]. Comy: Each of the three—fixation, clinging, adherence—arise by way of craving (*taṇhā*) and views (*dīṭṭhī*), for it is through these that one fixates to, clings to, inclines to the phenomena of the three spheres as “I” and “mine.” (SA 2:33). These three words appear to be syns or near-syns of latent tendency, but I have rendered them in order of their subtlety (fixation, clinging, adherence). See S:B 736 n31.

¹¹¹ “But this... ‘My self’,” *tañ cāyaṃ upāy’upādānaṃ cetaso adhiṭṭhānaṃ abhinivesānusayaṃ na upeti na upādiyati nādhiṭṭhati “attā me” ti*. Comy: Craving and views are called “mental standpoint” (*cetaso adhiṭṭhana*) because they are the foundation for the (unwholesome) mind, and “the latent tendency of adherence,” or perhaps “adherence and latent tendency” (*abhinivesānusaya*) because they stay to the mind and lie latent there (SA 2:33). This is a difficult sentence, and I am guided by the Sutta spirit than the letter. See S:B 736 n32. Cf Hāliddakāni S 1 (S 22.3.9/3:10) = SD 10.12.

¹¹² Comy: Suffering (*dukkha*) here refers to the 5 aggregates of clinging. What the noble disciple sees, when he reflects on his own existence, is not a self or a substantially existent person but only the arising and passing away of causal conditions (*paccay’uppanna,nirodha*) (of dependent arising). (SA 2:33). Cf *Sela*’s verses (S 548-551/1:134) & *Vajira*’s verses (S 553-55/1:135).

¹¹³ “Independent of others,” *apara-p.paccayā*. From stream-entry on, the noble disciple sees the truth of the Dharma by himself, and as such is not dependent on anyone else, not even the Buddha, for his insight into the Dharma. However, he may still approach the Buddha or an enlightened teacher for instructions and guidance in meditation until he attains liberation.

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